

Fort Sam Houston National Historic Landmark  
Kitchen and Mess Hall (Building #155, Cavalry Post)  
San Antonio  
Bexar County  
Texas

HABS No. TX-3303-14

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Architectural and Engineering Record  
National Parks Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
FORT SAM HOUSTON NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

KITCHEN AND MESS HALL  
(Building #155, Cavalry Post)

HABS No. TX-3303-14

Location: On the south side of Stanley Road, Behind Barracks #145 and #146, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Present Owner and Occupant: United States Army

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Kitchen and Mess Hall building is part of a complex of buildings including separate latrines and barracks completed in 1908 as part of the development of artillery and the Cavalry Post. The complex is one of four identical groupings immediately adjacent to each other, bordering on the south side of the cavalry and artillery parade grounds and New Braunfels Avenue.

All structures are built from standardized plans from the office of the Quartermaster General of the U.S. Army and provide a good example of turn-of-the-century military post design.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: 1908
2. Architect: Office of the Quartermaster General, U.S. Army; plan #93-P.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: U.S. Army from date of construction to the present.
4. Contractor: Not known.
5. Original Plans and Construction: The building was originally constructed with an H-shaped plan, and was divided into two separate kitchens and dining halls by a solid 20" wall running north-south at the center of the structure. The end wings, running north-south, were the dining area, and served the two adjacent barracks within the complex. Two separate kitchens were at the center of the building.

The building was constructed in 1908 at a cost of \$17,985.38.

6. Alterations and Additions: The exterior of the building has remained virtually unchanged with the exception of full basements, which were excavated in 1939. The interior was adapted for office use in 1946, and the central kitchens were removed at that time. The building still remains as two separate areas divided by the central north-south wall.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: This building, designed as part of the Cavalry Post at Fort Sam Houston, was built from standard Quartermaster plans. However, as it employs the same material and displays the same details as the buildings immediately around it, the utilitarian structure consequently contributes to the overall cohesiveness of this turn-of-the-century complex.
2. Condition of Fabric: The fabric appears to be structurally sound; the interior condition is in fair condition due to lack of use, but the pressed tin is deteriorating.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all Dimensions: This building has one story with a fully excavated basement and it measures 10 bays (12 on the south elevation) by 5 bays in an "H"-shaped plan. The recesses in the plan face to the north and south.
2. Foundations: The structure is set on a base of rock-faced, coursed limestone above grade and rubble and block limestone below grade. The porches rest on exposed limestone piers.
3. Wall Construction, Finish and Color: The walls are made of smooth surface red brick, common-bond, finished in a 5-1-5 stretcher-to-header pattern.
4. Structural System, Framing: The structural system consists of brick load-bearing walls with frame roofing. Tie rods at the basement level run both north-south and east-west in both end bays.

5. Porches, Stoops and Bulkheads: The front, north porch runs the full length of the building and is approximately nine feet deep. It is sheltered by an extension of the main roof and is supported by hollow wood, modified Tuscan columns on boxed wood pilasters. The floor is two inch tongue-and-groove wood decking. It is enclosed by pipe railing, painted black.

The rear porch is inset between the two projecting wings on the south side, with the extended roof supported by seven evenly-spaced boxed columns with chamfered corners. This porch is raised from grade approximately two to three feet with concrete steps provided at three intervals.

Two basement entrance bulkheads on the south side of the building are poured-concrete-and-coursed-limestone wells, ten steps below grade. These wells are set approximately nine feet inside the projecting bays on the east and west ends.

6. Chimneys: The building has three evenly-spaced chimneys. One massive central chimney is set behind the ridge line on the south side. Two large metal cylindrical vents flank this center stack. Two interior chimneys, each one just inside the projecting bays at the east and west ends are set on the north side of the ridge line.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and Doors: Double door entrances off the north porch leading into the projecting east and west wings each have five-light transoms above. Triple brick rowlocks are found above the five panel double-door entries.

A center single door entrance on the north facade has a three light transom above. This door provides access to the east side of the building.

Two separate center doors, side by side, are on the south elevation, providing access into the east and west sides. Doors have recessed, fixed, three-light transoms.

All doors are five-panel doors set in brick segmental-arched openings, and all have exterior screen doors.

The basement level also has five-panel, double-door entries with exterior screen doors.

- b. Windows: Windows have six-over-six double-hung sash set in brick segmental-arched openings with double rowlock arches above. Windows are squared off at the top with wood frame insets. All windows have wood frame screens.

Five, three-pane, upper-hinged, casement windows are at grade underneath the porch on the north side, providing light to the basement.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape and Covering: A hipped roof with a ridge running east-west has intersecting hipped roofs covering each end wing with the ridge running north-south. The roof flares slightly as it extends out to shelter the front and rear porches.

The roof is covered with French clay tiles and rolled clay ridge caps.

- b. Cornice and Eaves: There are wide overhanging eaves with outriggers.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Basement: The basement is divided into two separate east and west areas with no connection between the two. Main access is provided from two south exterior bulkhead entrances. A simple frame interior stairway on the west end leads to the first floor. The two basement areas both have separate spaces defined by interior walls - none of these areas with any apparent function other than storage.
- b. First Floor: The building has been modified from its original plan with no kitchen facilities visible. Open wings at each end functioned as dining areas originally - these remain unaltered.

- 2. Stairways: One interior two-run wood frame stairway to basement along the center north wall of the west section. No interior stairway on the east side.

3. Flooring: Brown 12" square tile flooring is found throughout the building. Wall-to-wall carpeting covers the floor in the east end room.

The basement has a poured concrete floor.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: Painted plaster walls are in all rooms with plain trim baseboard and window and door surrounds.
5. Doors and Doorways: The interior doors are five-panel doors horizontally set with surrounding plain trim.
6. Special Decorative Features: The pressed tin ceilings in most rooms are in poor condition.
7. Mechanical Equipment:
  - a. Heating: Heating is now provided by individual gas stoves throughout.
  - b. Lighting: Lighting is primarily suspended florescent fixtures with some suspended globe, incandescent light fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The mess hall faces north directly behind the two-story barracks on Stanley Road. There is no significant landscaping. An unpaved parking lot is on the south side. The mess hall is part of a complex of similarly built cavalry post buildings in the immediate area.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Old Views:

Fort Sam Houston Museum, Building #123, San Antonio, Texas.

B. Bibliography:

Real Property Records, Directorate of Facilities Engineering, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

Handy, Mary Olivia. History of Fort Sam Houston. San Antonio, Texas: Naylor, Inc., 1951, p. 66-67.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The detailed survey of eighteen (18) architecturally representative structures, and a group of streetscapes, at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, was undertaken in 1980 by the National Architectural and Engineering Record (NAER) after a comprehensive inventory of the Post was conducted. Funding for the project was made possible through the cooperative efforts of the Department of the Army, Fort Sam Houston, and the San Antonio Conservation Society.

This project was under the general supervision of Kenneth Anderson, Acting Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey of the National Architectural and Engineering Record. Sally Tompkins of the NAER staff was project supervisor. Project Historian was Kathryn A. Burns, San Antonio, Texas. Photographic records were provided by David Kaminsky, Roswell, New Mexico.